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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
28 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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HIGHLIGHTS

Hanoi continues to prepare for the possibility of air attacks. One North Vietnamese official in France alleges that one third of Hanoi's population has been evacuated.

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Premier Quat is moving forward with his plans to abolish the Armed Forces Council.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US marines have launched their largest ground probe to date into Viet Cong-controlled territory near Da Nang air base (Para. 1). A major sweep operation, involving 1,600 South Vietnamese troops, has been initiated against an enemy concentration in the Mekong Delta province of Kien Hoa (Para. 2). Communist guerrillas attacked and overran a Vietnamese Ranger outpost west of Saigon, inflicting heavy personnel and weapons losses on defending government troops (Para. 3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Premier Quat has told Ambassador Taylor that he has won general military approval for his plan to abolish the Armed Forces Council and now has only to work out the method of its dissolution (Para. 1). South Vietnam's leading labor leader has privately expressed apprehension over Quat's weakness in maintaining control over his cabinet (Para. 2).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: US Navy aircraft have damaged a number of patrol craft at Quang Khe naval base (Para. 1). US and VNAF aircraft continue strikes against bridges, ferries, and other installations (Paras. 2-4).

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North Vietnamese civil defense efforts continue (Para. 9).

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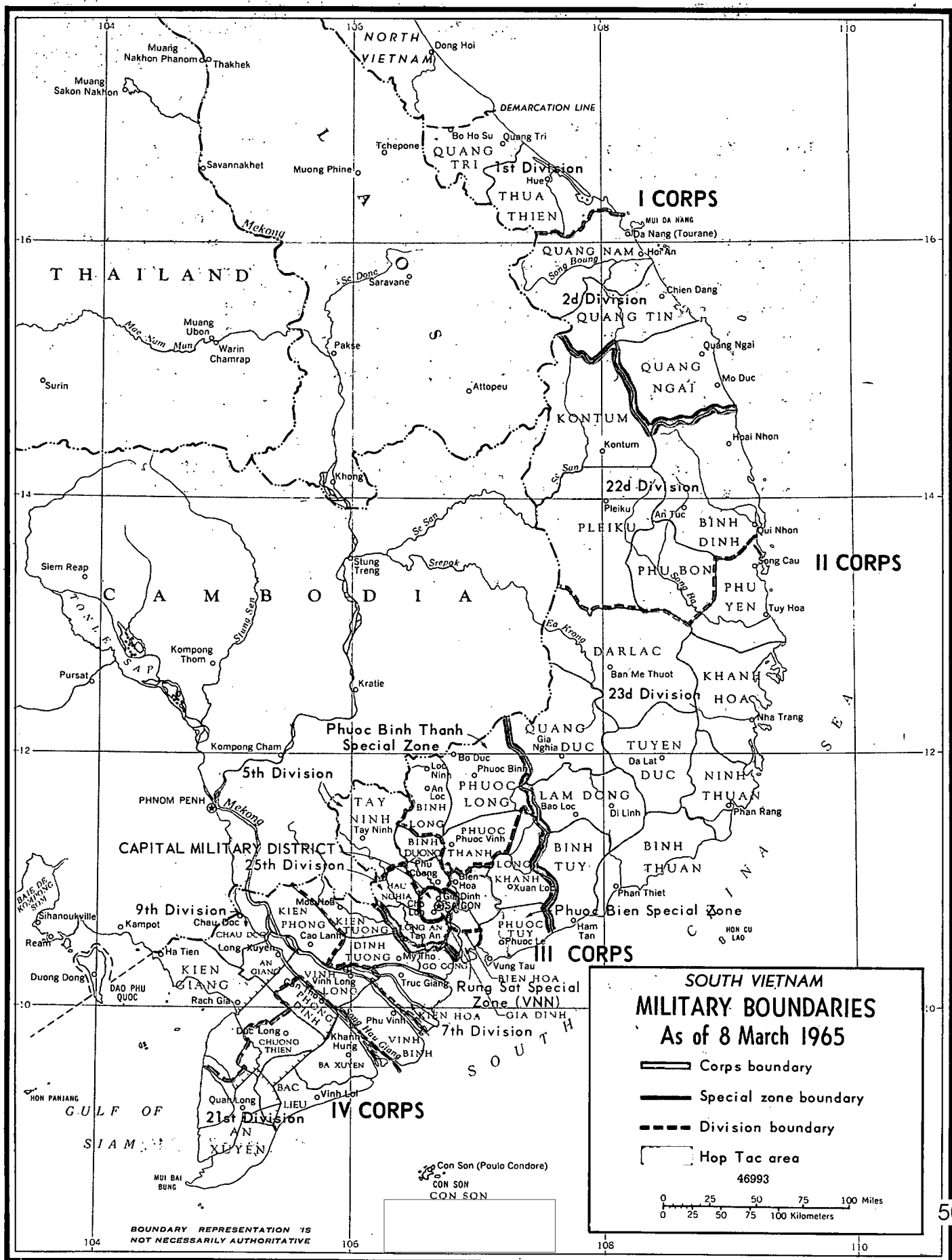
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V. Communist Political Developments: The Chinese Communists are making private statements designed to reinforce their propaganda concerning the possibility of direct Chinese involvement in Vietnam. (Paras. 1-3). In Paris, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko has maintained the Soviet position that the US must cease air strikes before a conference on Vietnam can be held (Para. 6). TASS reports that President Johnson's 27 April news conference contains no new constructive proposals (Para. 8).

VI. Other Major Aspects: An alleged South Vietnamese air strike on Cambodian villages may draw a strong Cambodian response (Para. 1).

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I. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. According to the press, US marines today launched their largest ground probe to date into Viet Cong-controlled territory near Da Nang air base, in Quang Tin Province. An advance company of marines moved out yesterday, setting up a forward command post to direct a search-and-destroy operation in an area ten to 15 miles west of Da Nang. Several other marine companies--on foot and aboard troop-carrying helicopters reportedly --joined the operation today.

2. Meanwhile, 60 miles south of Saigon, 1,600 government troops reportedly initiated a sweep operation along the swampy coast of Kien Hoa Province against an estimated concentration of two Viet Cong companies. The troops immediately drew heavy fire from the guerrillas, but it was not known how extensive the engagement was. Eighty UH-1B helicopters participated in the operation, airlifting one ARVN battalion to the strike zone, while a second battalion of ground forces was moved in from the sea by landing craft. The target area was initially softened up by bombing and strafing raids by US F-100 and US B-57 jets.

3. The press also reports that an unknown number of Viet Cong attacked and overran a Vietnamese ranger outpost 20 miles west of Saigon early today, killing 35 government troops, wounding ten, and capturing a large quantity of weapons, including a light machine gun and seven submachine guns. An additional ten rangers were reported missing. The Viet Cong also placed 81-mm. mortar fire on a government post two miles from the ranger position, killing one ARVN soldier and wounding six. Some of the mortar rounds reportedly fell into a civilian concentration camp, wounding 30 prisoners.

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4. The government's large-scale search-and-destroy operation initiated on 25 April in Quang Tri Province against the 804th main force Viet Cong battalion and two local force Viet Cong companies was favorably terminated on 26 April, with Communist losses listed as 20 killed (body count), an estimated 40 killed carried away, 31 captured, 124 suspects detained, and 18 weapons seized. Government forces suffered only one killed.

5. MACV's military report for 26 April lists 106 Communist-initiated incidents, five of them occurring during the reporting period. Guerrilla-directed 60-mm. mortar fire was placed on the district town of Phu Quoc in Kien Giang Province and on a Regional Forces post in Bien Hoa Province. Government outposts in Phong Dinh and Bien Hoa provinces received small arms harassing fire. A New Life Hamlet was entered and harassed in Long Khanh Province. Small-scale terrorism, mine detonations against ARVN convoys, and sabotage against government lines of communication remained widespread.

6. Six government ground operations of battalion size or larger were initiated and ten terminated, leaving 21 in progress on 26 April. With the exception of the operation described in Para. 4 none of the operations resulted in significant contact with the enemy.

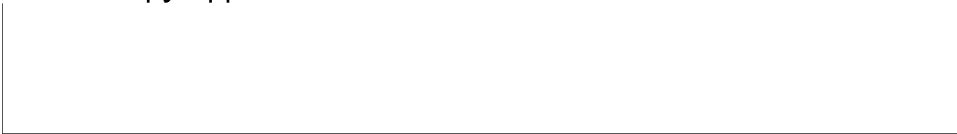
7. Small-unit actions conducted on 26 April increased to 2,381. Nine contacts were made with the Viet Cong, with enemy losses listed as 19 killed, one wounded, seven captured, and eight weapons. Government losses were seven killed, five wounded, and seven weapons.

8. The level of over-all VNAF/USAF activity rose sharply during the reporting period, with logistic support and training missions accounting for the bulk of the increase. USAF jets were active during the period, with 44 F-100s and four B-57s participating in support missions. Pilot

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reports from combat air operations conducted throughout South Vietnam on 26 April list 27 Viet Cong killed and 110 structures and two bridges destroyed.

9. As of 24 April, MACV's latest order of battle holdings for confirmed Viet Cong main force units in South Vietnam, including the 2nd Battalion, 101st Regiment, 325th PAVN Division, are as follows:

Regimental Headquarters	5
Battalions	54
Separate Companies	142
Separate Platoons	35
Hospitals	1

10. MACV carries confirmed main force personnel strength as 39,000, with another 8,000 carried as probable.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Premier Quat told ambassadors Taylor and Johnson yesterday that he now seemed to have general agreement from military leaders for a dissolution of the Armed Forces Council, with the only remaining question being how this step should be accomplished. He also said there was a general agreement with his plan to abolish the position of commander in chief, but no consensus on who should fill the new post of chief of the general staff. Quat said he expected to take care of General Minh, the present commander, by naming him minister of veteran's affairs.

2. Labor leader Tran Quoc Buu, who has in the past expressed some reservations about the orientation of the Quat regime, is now expressing to US officials his apprehension over what he feels is Quat's inability to control his cabinet. Citing the independent comments of Vice Premier Tuyen on his present trip to Africa and alleged political favoritism by the interior minister, Buu said he considered it important for Quat to make clear-cut decisions and put an end to the present "anarchy." Buu, who said Quat had asked him to use his influence to prevent any drastic move by the Catholics, contended that the Catholics have no intention of adding complications to the present serious situation.

3. Air Vice Marshal Ky has given a long interview to the press in which he advocates action on the ground in North Vietnam to set up an anti-Communist guerrilla movement and give Hanoi a taste of its own medicine. Ky also said he felt South Vietnam's real problem would come after the war ended and the government would have to cope with the problem of rooting out Communist political agents.

4. Premier Quat has told Ambassador Taylor that he has worked out a procedure to put off the execution of the terrorist sentenced in the US Embassy

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bombing and to "gain several weeks" for efforts to free a US civilian prisoner of the Viet Cong. Quat stressed that he hoped to avoid all press speculation on the matter.

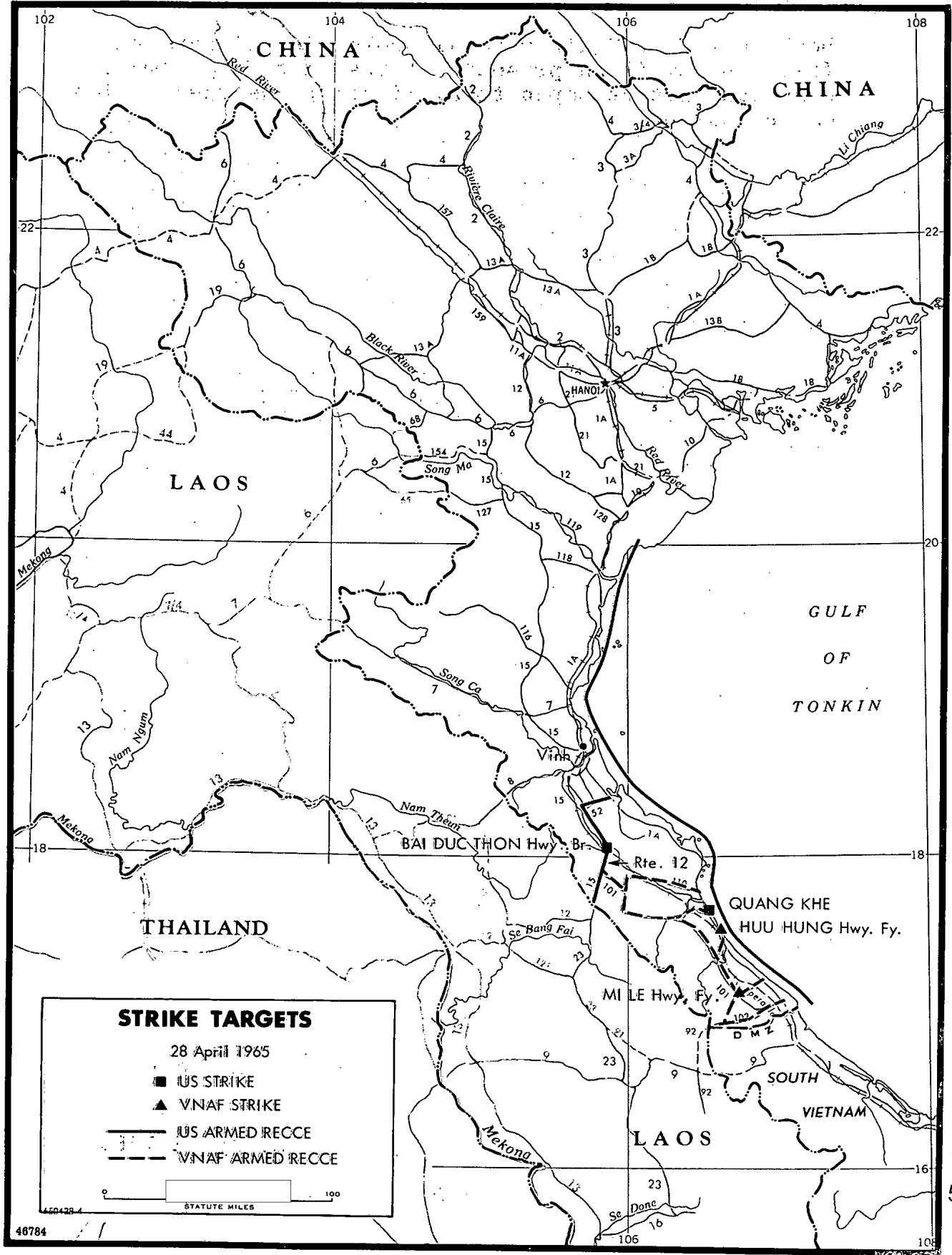
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NORTH VIETNAM



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. US Navy aircraft yesterday conducted a number of special missions against a concentration of five patrol craft near the naval base at Quang Khe. Many direct hits with napalm and Zuni rockets were scored by successive waves of strike aircraft and all five vessels were heavily damaged, if not totally destroyed.

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2. A combined Vietnamese and US Air Force strike against two ferries near the DMZ resulted in major damage to one ferry landing and at least one direct hit on the other ferry landing. Two ferry boats were also strafed with unknown results.

3. Another Vietnamese strike along the lateral roads between Routes 1 and 15 and between Route 101 and Route 1 to the DMZ resulted in the destruction of six new barracks, 18 small structures, and several wooden bridges.

4. A US Air Force strike against the Bai Duc Thon bridge caused further damage to the structure although the spans are still standing. An underwater bridge, of a type seen in the Korean war, is under construction about two miles north of the Bai Duc Thon bridge.

5. Results of several night armed reconnaissance missions on 28 April are not yet available.

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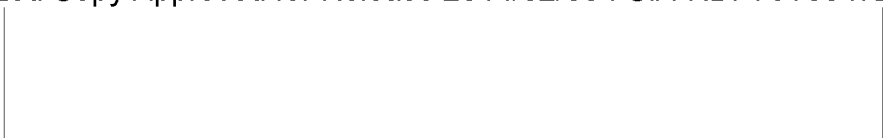
7. [redacted] reveals that a number of earthen revetments are under construction at Vinh airfield. This construction began

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sometime after 3 April. The field has not been used since 9 February and it seems unlikely that the Vietnamese will station any of their jet fighter aircraft at this vulnerable airfield in the immediate future. However, Vinh is capable of maintaining limited jet operations and the construction of aircraft revetments there suggests that it may be used as a recovery base.



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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. The Chinese Communists are apparently attempting to reinforce their threatening propaganda concerning the possibility of direct Chinese involvement in Vietnam by private statements about preparations for military intervention.

2. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Peiping is readying 15 battalions of infantry, nine of them Chinese, for deployment into South Vietnam. He said the Chinese believe that the addition of these troops will assure a US defeat or withdrawal within "the coming few months."

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3. Peiping has been saying in its open propaganda for some time that it is preparing for possible intervention, but it is unlikely that the Chinese would reveal any firm plans for intervention in this way. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] probably intended to generate additional pressure against US policy in Vietnam by increasing fears among US allies and neutrals that the world is on the verge of a major war in Southeast Asia.

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4. Peiping has harshly attacked Indian President Radhakrishnan's 24 April proposal to solve the Vietnam problem by stationing an Afro-Asian force along the boundary between North and South Vietnam. On 27 April NCNA assailed the plan as an Indian attempt "to find a way out" for the United States and to "directly help the United States to divide Vietnam permanently and occupy South Vietnam." Asserting that the Indian proposal in substance meant the dispatch of Indian troops to Vietnam "to play an active role as a US accomplice" as they had done previously in "suppressing the Congolese National Independence Movement," NCNA accused the Indian President of "violating" the stipulations of the 1954 Geneva agreements by describing the "provisional military demarcation line" between North and South Vietnam as a "boundary."

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5. Peiping is continuing its effort to play up popular opposition in the United States to the American involvement in Vietnam. On 28 April the People's Daily editorial asserted that the "widespread and energetic opposition" of the American people to the escalation of the war in Vietnam "has become a sword pointing at the heart of the Johnson administration." Adding that the opposition of the American people to "US aggression" against Vietnam is "a valuable support to the Vietnamese people," the editorial called on the American people to "shatter the Johnson administration's plan to escalate the war and to urge it to pull its troops out of Vietnam."

6. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, in his initial discussion with French officials in Paris, again maintained that a cessation of US air strikes against North Vietnam is a precondition for a conference on Vietnam. Much of his two-hour conversation about Southeast Asia dealt with the possibility of a conference on Cambodia with Gromyko reportedly indicating that the Soviets hope to reply favorably to the 26 April British request for early cochairmen action on this question. Recently, several Soviet spokesmen have privately hinted that there might be some new flexibility in North Vietnam's position regarding negotiations, and in taking a positive but cautious position on the question of a Cambodian conference have suggested that the conference might provide the opportunity for informal "corridor discussions" on Vietnam.

7. For the first time, a Soviet commentary on 27 April attacked alleged speculation in Washington and London that a Cambodian conference could be turned into a conference on Vietnam. Though a Cambodian conference is possible, the commentator asserted, "negotiations" concerning Vietnam are "unattainable" while the US continues its air strikes.

8. Reporting President Johnson's 27 April news conference, TASS asserted that "the American President made no new constructive proposals for settling

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the conflict in Southeast Asia and noted that the United States does not intend to change its policy in Vietnam." TASS also reported that the President claimed full control over the use of US nuclear weapons, and that there is no necessity or advantage to their use in Indochina. Soviet propaganda during the past few days has exploited this issue by raising the specter of a nuclear war in Southeast Asia.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Cambodia may move to sever diplomatic relations with the US following an early morning incident along the South Vietnamese border. According to press reports, Cambodia claims that four South Vietnamese Skyraider aircraft attacked two villages inside the Cambodian border opposite Tay Ninh Province, killing one person and wounding three others. The incident occurred shortly after an announcement by the National Assembly that relations with the US would be severed if another Cambodian was killed in a border incident.

2. Similar threats have been made by Prince Sihanouk in the past without being carried out. This time, however, a wave of government-sponsored anti-American sentiment, underscored by the attack on the US Embassy on 26 April, may have created an atmosphere in which Sihanouk feels compelled to make a strong response.

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